

One Stop Environmental LLC  
Shannon Riley, President & CEO

“SBA Success Story”

The 10th annual Inner City 100, a national competition that seeks to find and rank fast-growing companies in the nation's inner cities, has recognized **One Stop Environmental LLC** of Birmingham among its selections for 2008.

President & CEO Shannon Riley never suspected she would wound up with such recognition. “It is an honor and really thrilling for our Company,” she said. To qualify for the award, companies are required to have at least 51 percent of their operations in an economically distressed urban area, have a five-year sales history, and fifth-year sales of at least \$1 million.

She will fly to Boston soon to find out where her company ranked nationally.

The competition is sponsored by the [Initiative for a Competitive Inner City](#), a Boston-based nonprofit focused on fostering healthy urban economies, and Inc., a magazine that reports on growing companies and entrepreneurs.

This award has come on top of another from INC Magazine itself: a recent recognition of Riley’s firm as one of the 500 Fastest Growing Companies in America. Riley said it awards like these give her instant national credibility and exposure with customers.

Shannon, a Furman University chemistry grad with a masters’ degree in chemistry from the University of Alabama, wanted to be a soccer Mom – but a good one. Her four kids remain a high priority. “I never visualized running a company,” Riley said.

Running a company she does. With 35 employees, and over a 182 percent increase in revenues in 2006 over 2005, Riley has become not just a dedicated Mom, but also an award-winning Chief Executive. Her firm specializes in industrial services, waste disposal, remediation, chemical identification, emergency responses, and site assessments among other services.

One Stop Environmental has grown significantly since it gained 8A/SDB and HUBZone certification from the SBA several years ago. She credits the UAB Small Business Development Center (SBDC) with lots of help. Beginning in 2001, Brenda Cox, a SBDC counselor, helped Shannon prepare for certification. Shannon also used the match-making events sponsored by the SBDC to link up with possible customers.

In addition to a growing list of customers in Alabama, her firm has now done work in Louisiana helping in Katrina recovery.

Shannon actually began work life in New Mexico at Los Alamos National Labs following the advice of an early academic mentor. After she got to Birmingham, her first local employer closed its door. Riley realized she could not only earn more than the ten dollars an hour she was earning working for as a consultant by starting her own business. Starting her own business would also give her more freedom to handle her primary responsibilities as a Mother of four children. “I always had as a high priority being the best Mother I could be,” Riley explained. That hasn’t changed. It hasn’t hurt her business life either.

Riley impressed many customers early-on with her “nurturing” skills (her words). For example, in the early days, after starting her company, she worked without a contract for over a year with a federal agency to position herself. “I literally held their hands,” Riley emphasized. “And I eventually won the contract when they finally opened it.” Nurturing helps.

In a male-dominated market, Shannon has used her nurturing skills to position her Company as a “holding hands” company. “In many ways, nurturing clients is like rearing children – it’s a holding hands endeavor. That generates confidence in my Company as it does with my children,” Riley said.

Her clients appreciate that. With revenues now over \$5 million, Riley now has the tough task balancing her Company’s growth with available cash. “Cash flow is a now constant problem,” she emphasized. It is a problem, however, she manages with the same hands-on approach she has used with customers. She is not afraid to stick her hands into dirty problems. Riley confidently says she is a “driven-person.” It shows.

An important step in learning new techniques in management money and employees will be the SBA Mentoring program she has just started. “I am teamed up with a wonderful business owner (also a woman, Sylvia Medina) from Twin Falls, Idaho. She owns North Wind, Inc., a much larger company but in the same environmental clean-up line-of-work. She has really been great,” Riley emphasized.

Riley’s job as head of One Stop Environmental has been so successful she has been recognized by the Birmingham Business Journal as one of the City’s Top 10 Business Women for 2007. And the Birmingham Chamber just announced Riley as its 2008 Entrepreneur of the Year.

Add that local recognition to the others from national publications – an impressive array. SBA salutes Shannon Riley and One Stop Environmental. Her Company thrives because it reflects her values. They are truly a success story.